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PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CREATION OF AN AFRICAN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR SOLAR ENERGY

Executive summary*

* The present summary constitutes the main document for consideration.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE CREATION OF AN AFRICAN REGIONAL CENTRE FOR SOLAR ENERGY

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Constitution of the African Regional Centre for Solar Energy was approved following the fifth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers held in Rabat in March 1979.

2. The objectives of the Centre are:

(a) to encourage African Governments to include in their development plans, with priority status, projects for the development and utilization of renewable sources of energy in general and of solar, wind and bio-methane energy in particular;

(b) to encourage the introduction of studies of new energy utilization in school and university curricula and strengthen research in solar energy and its derivatives and experimentation and applications of such energy;

(c) to aid member States in carrying out fundamental research in solar energy, to strengthen existing centres or promote the creation of new centres, and to carry out research and products development as necessary and test products, systems, or for performance, reliability and adaptability;

(d) to promote multinational co-operation with regard to the practical use of solar energy and other renewable sources of energy;

(e) to encourage the establishment of new national centres as necessary and establish subregional centres for purposes of liaison and co-ordination in the field of research and development of solar energy utilization;

(f) to encourage the popularization of local manufacture of equipment using solar energy and promote local industries in the fields of solar technology so as to reduce the cost of equipment making use of solar energy in Africa;

(g) to do everything in its power to improve the conditions in which research is conducted and to enhance the working conditions of researchers by awarding prizes;

(h) to work towards the establishment of a data bank in solar energy and its derivatives;

(i) by means of demonstrations, seminars, workshops, meetings, trade fairs, exhibitions of equipment and films, to arouse awareness among States members of the region of the sources, uses and benefits of solar energy;

(j) to disseminate results of solar energy studies co-ordinated in the region or elsewhere in the world;

(k) to take such other steps and do such other things as are related to or are incidental to the functions of the Centre or as may promote the attainment of the objectives of the Centre;

(l) to ensure that research findings are made the common property of the member States.

3. In the Plan of Action adopted by the Heads of State and Government at Lagos in April 1980 and more particularly in the section on new and renewable sources of energy, it was recommended that the Regional Centre for Solar Energy should be established immediately.

4. Between July 1979 and September 1982, 18 countries became members of the Centre, namely the Upper Volta, the Niger, Egypt, Burundi, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Djibouti, Zaire, Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, the Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Uganda, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Gabon and Zambia.

II. PRESENT STATUS

5. The inaugural meeting of the Council was held from 12 to 14 May 1982 at Addis Ababa. The purpose of the meeting was to proclaim the official establishment of the Centre and its Council and to consider such other important items as:

(a) the selection of the headquarters;

(b) the annual and special contributions to be paid by States members of the Centre;

(c) the programme work of the Centre, etc.

As no decision could be taken concerning the choice of the headquarters, the matter was postponed to an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

6. The extraordinary meeting was held from 10 to 12 January 1983 at Addis Ababa, preceeded by the inaugural meeting of the Executive Board. The questions considered by the Executive Board included the programme of work and budget of the Centre. The programme of work was divided into five phases of activity (January 1983 to December 1985). However, the Council approved the budget for the first two phases scheduled for the 1983 financial year. The first two phases will be devoted solely to the recruitment of staff and the preparation of design studies for the administrative buildings, laboratories and workshops and the technical specifications of equipment. Expenditure for these two phases amounts to $US 1,963,050 while the total package for all activities until December 1985 is in the order of $ 10,246,490.

III. PROBLEMS

7. Concerning the choice of headquarters, four countries have offered to host the Centre. They are Burundi, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, the Sudan and Djibouti. At the extraordinary meeting of the Council held in Addis Ababa in January 1983, no consensus could be reached and, when Djibouti initially withdrew its candidature, the Council took the following decisions:

(a) The three countries, namely, Burundi, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Sudan, should continue to hold consultations at the highest level in order to get out of the impasse concerning the choice of host country for the Centre's headquarters;

(b) The Executive Secretary of ECA would help the three member States in their consultations;

(c) The three member States (Burundi, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and the Sudan) should inform the ECA secretariat of the results of their consultations within a period of three months and the secretariat, in consultation with the Chairman of the extraordinary meeting of the Council, would make the necessary arrangements for holding another meeting of the Council so as to decide on the results of the consultations and solve the problem of the choice of headquarters of the Centre;

(d) Should the consultations fail, the Council would have no alternative but to solve the problem by accepting other candidates and voting on the choice of host country.

8. As at 31 December 1983 no State member had paid its contribution.

9. In order to ensure that the African Regional Centre for Solar Energy might run smoothly, the Council appealed to all States members of ECA and OAU to sign the Constitution of the Centre. The secretariat of ECA was requested to contact all States not yet members of the Centre and explain to them why they should become members of the Centre.